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LATEST E-MAIL SCAM AN INSULT TO MILITARY SERVING OVERSEAS

BISMARCK – The latest version of a well-known scam has reached a new low, all in an effort to trick people into giving out bank account information, warned Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

This latest e-mail version claims the sender is serving with the US Marines in Iraq. It states that while fighting enemy forces the sender captured a terrorist and tortured him until the terrorist revealed the location of a secret stash of weapons and several millions in US currency. The scam artist claims he needs help transferring the money out of Iraq, and offers to pay 30% if the reader will pass the money through a personal bank account. For “security reasons” the reader is asked to keep the transaction secret – and, of course, to provide bank account information to the scam artist.

“This e-mail is nothing more than another version of the old e-mail scam known as the ‘Nigerian Letter’ scam,” said Stenehjem. “Just when you think you have seen it all, the scam artists come up with another, even dirtier, trick. They will try anything – even pretending to be a US military member engaged in illegal and dishonorable acts – to make a quick profit off an unsuspecting victim.”

In the “Nigerian letter” scam, con artists entice their victims into believing they have been singled out from the masses to share in multi-million dollar windfall profits. Typically, a company or individual receives an unsolicited letter, fax or e-mail from someone overseas. The sender always claims to be in possession of millions of dollars, usually obtained or kept hidden at great personal risk, and needs help from “someone who can be trusted” in transferring the money out of the foreign country. The sender asks the trusted reader to pass the money through a personal bank account, in return for which the reader can keep a share of the millions.

“There are dozens of different variations of this e-mail from several countries, all involving a plea for help and a promise to share the riches,” said Parrell Grossman, director of the Consumer Protection division. “It doesn’t matter what the story is, every single one is a scam.”

Consumers with questions about suspicious e-mails or offers that appear to be too good to be true, should contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at (701) 328-3404 or toll-free at 1-800-472-2600. Additional information regarding the “Nigerian letter” scam and other common scams is available from the Consumer Protection link of the Attorney General's website, at www.ag.nd.gov.